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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING: PAKISTAN

¶1. The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against non-essential travel to Pakistan in light of the threat of terrorist activity. This replaces the Travel Warning dated February 25, 2009, updates information on security incidents and reminds U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Pakistan.

¶2. Pakistani military forces are currently engaged in a campaign against extremist elements across many areas of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of the Northwest Frontier Province, including the Swat Valley. In response to this campaign, militants have vowed to step up attacks against both civilian and government targets in Pakistan's cities.

¶3. The presence of Al-Qaida, Taliban elements, and indigenous militant sectarian groups poses a potential danger to American citizens throughout Pakistan, especially in the western border regions of the country. Continuing tensions in the Middle East also increase the possibility of violence against Westerners. Terrorists and their sympathizers have successfully attacked civilian and government targets. The Pakistan government has heightened security measures, particularly in the major cities. Threat reporting indicates terrorist groups continue to seek opportunities to attack locations where Americans and Westerners are known to congregate or visit, such as shopping areas, hotels, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, schools, or outdoor recreation events.

¶4. Visits by U.S. government personnel to Peshawar and Karachi are limited and movements by U.S. government personnel assigned to the Consulates in those cities are severely restricted. American officials in Lahore and Islamabad are instructed to restrict the frequency and to

minimize the duration of trips to public markets, restaurants, and other locations. Only a limited number of official visitors are placed in hotels, for limited stays. Depending on ongoing security assessments, the U.S. Embassy places areas such as hotels, markets, and/or restaurants off limits to official personnel. American citizens in Pakistan are strongly urged to avoid hotels that do not apply stringent security measures and to maintain good situational awareness, particularly when visiting locations frequented by Westerners.

¶ 15. On November 12, 2008, an American government contractor and his driver in Peshawar were shot and killed in their car. In September 2008, over fifty people, including three Americans, were killed and hundreds were injured when a suicide bomber set off a truck filled with explosives outside a major international hotel in Islamabad. In August 2008, gunmen stopped and shot at the vehicle of an American diplomat in Peshawar. In March 2008, a restaurant frequented by Westerners in Islamabad was bombed, killing one patron and seriously injuring several others, including four American diplomats. On March 2, 2006, an American diplomat, a Consulate employee, and three others were killed when a suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives alongside the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi. Fifty-two others were wounded.

¶ 16. Extremist and sectarian violence has resulted in fatal bomb attacks in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore, and other Pakistani cities in 2008 and 2009. According to media reports, in the last 14 months, there have been more than 1,800 incidents of terrorism across the country resulting in more than 1,300 deaths and scores of injuries. Some of the attacks have

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occurred outside major hotels, in market areas and other locations frequented by Americans. Other recent targets have included restaurants, Pakistani government officials and buildings, police and security forces, mosques, and international NGOs. Since late 2007, occasional rockets have targeted areas in and around Peshawar.

¶ 17. Since 2007, several American citizens throughout Pakistan have been kidnapped for ransom or for personal reasons. Kidnappings of foreigners are particularly common in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan. In 2008, one Iranian and two Afghan diplomats, two Chinese engineers, and a Polish engineer were kidnapped in NWFP. In February 2009, an American UNHCR official was kidnapped in Baluchistan. Kidnappings of Pakistanis also increased dramatically across the country, usually for ransom.

¶ 18. Access to many areas of Pakistan, including the FATA along the Afghan border, and the area adjacent to the Line of Control (LOC) in the disputed territory of Kashmir, is restricted by local government authorities for non-Pakistanis. Travel to any restricted region requires official permission by the Government of Pakistan. Failure to obtain such permission in advance can result in arrest and detention by Pakistani authorities. Due to security concerns the U.S. Government currently allows only essential travel within the FATA by American officials. Travel to much of the Northwest Frontier Province and Balochistan is also restricted.

¶ 19. Rallies, demonstrations, and processions occur regularly throughout Pakistan on very short notice. In the aftermath of the December 2007 death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, widespread rioting in Karachi led to multiple deaths and injuries as well as widespread property damage. Demonstrations have often taken on an anti-American or anti-western character, and Americans are urged to avoid large gatherings.

¶10. U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Pakistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to register with the Embassy in Islamabad or the Consulates in Karachi, Lahore, or Peshawar. This registration can be completed online through the Department of State's travel registration website. Alternatively, Americans without Internet access should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate for information on registering in person. Registration enables citizens to obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan via the emergency alert system (Warden network).

¶11. Americans in country should take measures for their safety and security. These measures include maintaining good situational awareness, avoiding crowds and demonstrations and keeping a low profile. Avoid setting patterns by varying times and routes for all required travel. Ensure that travel documents and visas are valid at all times. Official Americans are instructed to avoid use of public transportation and restrict their use of personal vehicles in response to security concerns.

¶12. Security threats may on short notice temporarily restrict the ability of U.S. Missions, particularly in Peshawar, to provide routine consular services. All American citizens are encouraged to apply for renewal of travel documents at least three months prior to expiration.

¶13. The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5; telephone: (92-51) 208-0000, including after hours emergency assistance; Consular Section telephone: (92-51) 208-2700; fax: (92-51) 282-2632; website: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov>.

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The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi is located at 8 Abdullah Haroon Road; telephone: (92-21) 520-4200 or (92-21) 520-4400 for after hours emergency assistance; fax: (92-21) 568-0496; website: <http://karachi.usconsulate.gov>.

The U.S. Consulate in Lahore is located on 50 Sharah-E-Abdul Hamid Bin Badees (Old Empress Road), near Shimla Hill Rotary; telephone: (92-42) 603-4000, including after hours emergency assistance; fax: (92-42) 603-4200; website: <http://lahore.usconsulate.gov>.

The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, Peshawar; telephone: (92-91) 526-8800, including after hours emergency assistance; fax: (92-91) 528-4171; website: <http://Peshawar.usconsulate.gov>.

¶14. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the Worldwide Caution and the Pakistan Country Specific Information can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

¶15. Minimize considered.
CLINTON